

Summer
2011

MOCC - EPC

Acolytes Handbook

*"Be present, Lord Jesus, be present! Grant that I may faithfully and loyally serve you in love and through my service proclaim, "In all things, God be glorified."
Amen.*





Welcome

We welcome you as an Acolyte at Mother Of Christ Church, Hong Kong. Your collaboration and service is important because you will be assisting the celebrant in the worship of God.

The main purpose of this handbook is to be a handy guide for all men and women as they begin their service. No manual can be complete; we need to acknowledge that every parish has its own customs and variations on the celebration. However the content are basically directions that apply in general.

Background

The word “**acolyte**” comes from the Greek word “**akolouthos**” which means “**a servant**”, someone who takes care of another.

The Old and the New Testament show origins and the custom of such service. One example from the Old Testament is the person of the prophet Samuel and Elisha assisting Eli the priest. The role of the Acolytes consists on assists pastors, elders, and deacons so that worshipers may worship and celebrate the rites of the Church with simple dignity.



Some Things To Remember

When serving, please remember the three “P’s”:

Punctuality – When you are on time, everything flows more smoothly.

Pay Attention – Be aware of your role in the service so that you will be prepared.

Participate – Take an active part in the celebration and assist younger acolytes follow the services. There are many eyes on you looking for guidance and direction.

It would help you to be prompt and alert, in that way you will have no problems and you would learn to stay on top of things and anticipate any last minute changes.



Begin With Prayer

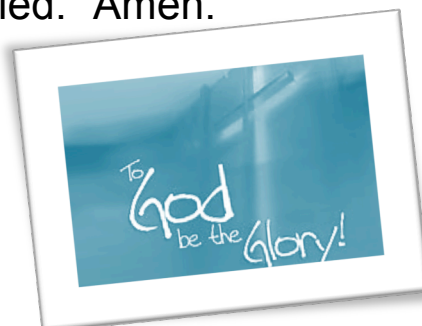
“Let love be genuine. Hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:9-12

Before the Service:

Be present, Lord Jesus, be present! Grant that I may faithfully and loyally serve you in love and through my service proclaim, “In all things, God be glorified.” Amen.

After the Service:

Glory to you, Lord Jesus, Glory to you! Grant that as I have served you in your presence, so I may witness faithfully and loyally to your love in the world and forever proclaims, “In all things, God be glorified.” Amen.





General Instructions For Everyone

Processing and Recessing

- After getting robed, acolytes assemble in the entrance door at least five minutes before the service is scheduled to begin.
- The acolyte coordinating or the Priest will let you know when it is time to process during the processional hymn.
- At the recessional song the acolyte with the cross would lead the procession after the celebrant kiss the altar.

Dress Code

- Wear proper clothes. Avoid the use of short pants, mini skirts, sleeveless T-shirts, T-shirts or sleeveless tops. Keep in mind that we are entering to a holy and sacred place; after all you will not be worshipping any person, but God.
- Guys should wear black or dark socks and shoes. [dark running shoes or athletic are fine, but no sandals].
- Gals should similarly wear appropriate socks or stockings and shoes. [No spike heels or sandals].
- Hair should be neatly done, and hands and fingernails clean.

Arrive 15 minutes before the service.



Find your vestments and get dressed. Check with the acolyte coordinator or the president of the celebration, for any special instructions.

During the service, be a model for others.

- Keep in mind that the attention of the assembly is not to be on those up in front but in the liturgy. Therefore, always move discreetly and quietly, and above all with reverence.
- When the others acolytes for particular reason stand or sit, be sure you do too. The congregation is looking to you and sometimes would follow your lead.



Posture

- When Standing – stand up straight and tall.

- When Sitting – find a comfortable position that allows you to keep your back straight in a good posture. Keep both feet on the floor, head up and eyes forward. Keep your knees together while sitting.

- When kneeling – put all of your weight on your knees and kneel upright. Do no squat or slouch.





- When bowing – There are two types of bows: the solemn and the simple. The solemn bow is used when reverencing the altar, and at other times as directed. The head and shoulders so that if your hands were out in front of you, they would almost touch your knees. Jesus [optional] and on other occasions of reverence, is made with the head, inclining the shoulders slightly.

Hands



- Hands should be folded and never hang down at your sides or hang folded below the waist. When sitting, either fold your hands in your lap or place them straight out on your knees with palms down.

Responses

- You are part of the assembly gathered for the celebration and it is one of your responsibilities to lead the people in prayers and responses. Don't rush or lag behind, we are one community, one body, one voice.

Walking

- Remember to always walk slowly and with dignity. Do not appear rushed or hurried, but at the same time keep the same pace in all your movements since the beginning.

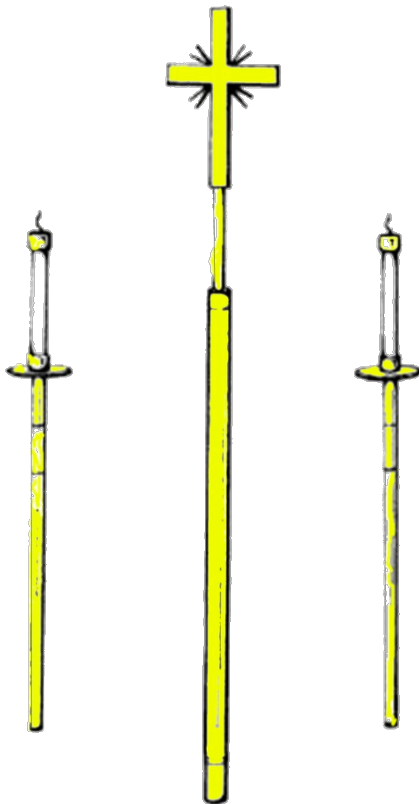
The sign of the cross



- The sign of the cross should always be made reverently and in a dignified manner. Remember, you are signing yourself with the Cross of Christ and this act of devotion should convey that meaning. The use of the sign of the cross by those serving at the altar is determined by the custom of the parish and the direction of the priest. A good general rule is that when the celebrant makes the sign of the cross, you make the sign of the cross; when the celebrant does not, you do not.

Eyes

- Your eyes should be focused on the table, reader or preacher. It is very easy to get distracted but you have to be ready for the next step on the celebration.



The Torchbearer

The acolyte torchbearer, or candle bearer, is a server who carries a candle or a torch. These are always carried in pairs, never singly. If there is a crucifier, the acolytes walk with lighted candles on either side in line with the crucifier.

Since ancient times, light and fire have reminded people that God is here with us. Fire is a symbol of God's Spirit and



reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

General Principles

- ✚ Check the candle bearer and make sure it has a candle that will last the whole ceremony.
- ✚ Carry the candle so that it is even with the other acolyte's candle. Ideally the light should be level with your forehead; however, if your partner is of a different height, adjustment should be made. The main point is that the candles when carried are at an equal height.
- ✚ Carrying the torches [if that is the case] you should grasp the pole firmly with both hands in such a way that the torch will be balanced and you will not tip it and drop oil all over the place, or on yourself. Be careful of stairs, remember to raise the pole slightly, so that it does not catch on a step. When standing still and holding a torch, you may rest it on the floor to keep it balanced.
- ✚ Walk in a slow, steady and dignified manner.



✚ ***Never bow or genuflect when holding a torch or candle.*** Always be reverent and dignified, but be careful of spilling oil or wax.

The Crucifier

The primary function of the crucifier is to carry the processional cross at the entrance, during a solemn



procession, and at the recessing procession. The crucifier may also be expected to do some of the other assisting actions that are general responsibilities of the servers.

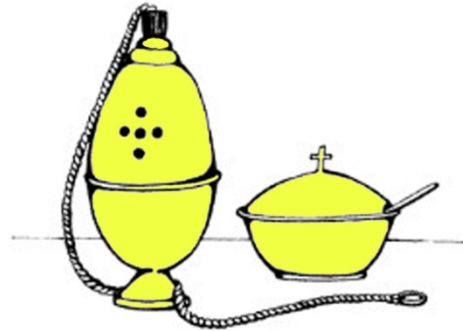
General Principles

- ✚ The cross must always be carried with dignity. The best way is to hold it firmly with both hands in the middle of the pole. Your elbows should be relaxed. Be sure that the symbol or the figure of Christ crucified is facing out. Carry the processional cross slightly raised from the ground. This all depends on your height, but in all cases make sure that it is held firmly and that the position looks relaxed and dignified.
- ✚ The crucifer leads the procession at the entrance [unless incense is used, in which case the crucifer follows at least four feet behind the thurible]. The cross is placed in its base and straight facing the congregation. The crucifer goes to the place assigned.
- ✚ ***When carrying the processional cross, never bow or genuflect.*** Be careful of steps. Raise the pole slightly higher when approaching them. Also be careful of low beams, hanging electrical wires or the like. Lower the cross whenever there is a chance that you may hit these objects.
- ✚ Carry the cross straight, not tilting forward or backward. This takes practice and be sure you know what you are doing before you have to do it.



Thurible and boat

Incense has been used since biblical times as both an offering to God and to visually represent our prayers rising to God. A third biblical use was to cleanse or purify offerings to God. The traditional offerings include the alms, bread and wine, and even ourselves.



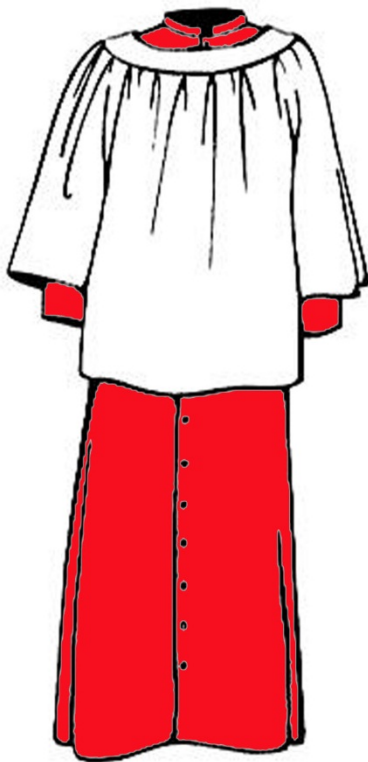
General Principles

- ✚ The acolyte on charge has to be at least fifteen minutes before ceremony to light up the charcoal.
- ✚ The Thurible leads the procession at the entrance.
- ✚ Thurible and Boat has to accompany the celebrant at the moment that he incenses the altar and the cross. It could be just after the entrance procession or in the hymn of Glory. Sometimes, the priest would incense other images during especial ceremonies or celebrations.
- ✚ Before the celebrant raise up the Book of Gospel, the Thurible and Boat should approach to him and he would add the incense three times. They would not accompany the priest but they would approach near by the ambo to handle the Thurible before the proclamation of the Gospel [... a reading of the Holy Gospel according to N....].



✚ The next time that the incense would be used would take place on the offertory and at the moment of the consecration of the bread and wine. During the offertory both [Thurible and Boat] should accompany the priest to incense the altar. As soon he finished, the Thurible would incense the celebrant two by three times and after would do the same with the congregation. At the time of the consecration both acolytes would kneel down in front of the altar and incense three by three times the bread and the cup at the time the priest raised up.

Equipment and Vestments For Acolytes, Priest and Deacons



Every vestment and piece of equipment on the altar has a specific purpose and a significance that in some cases goes back centuries. Every parish is little different and that may result that not all the vestments used on each one would be describe on this handbook.

Acolytes wear one of two types of vestment, either the cassock and cotta or surplice, or the server's alb. Both serve to cover street clothes and help keep the attention of both the acolyte and the congregation on worship rather than on the latest fashion.



✚ **Cassock:** A simple robe with a high split collar, fitted at the shoulders and sleeves and falling straight to the ankle with no elaborate tucks or gathers. It is usually worn with a surplice or cotta. The traditional color for acolyte cassocks is red, the color of celebration. The priest's cassock is most often black and was originally the outer garment worn by a priest.



✚ **Surplice or cotta:** A loose-fitting overgarment with bell sleeves. It is usually white and made of gathered material attached to a rounded or square yoke. A surplice or cotta is worn over the cassock. Acolytes and choir generally wear the shorter cotta. An acolyte's sleeves are often shortened to keep them from catching on vessels or equipment as the acolyte works. Priest most often wear the longer cathedral-length surplice with full-length sleeves. The historical purpose of a surplice or cotta was to keep the cassock clean during the working part of the service, which is why, in many parishes, the acolyte still performs any duties before the entry procession and after the exit procession without wearing the cotta.

✚ **Server's alb:** A simple, long, loose-fitting robe with sleeves, with or without a hood. It is tied at the waist with a rope belt called cincture. The alb is generally white or flax colored,



although some parishes now use other colors. Priest may also wear an alb as a basic garment to cover street clothing under clerical vestments. Historically, the acolyte's vestments concealed or covered differences in social status, ensured that only relatively clean outer clothing was worn to approach the altar, and keep the wearer warm in unheated stone churches.

✚ **Cincture:** This is the long rope belt tied around the waist of an alb. Acolytes usually tie this in a simple square or slipknot on the right side with the ends hanging fairly even. Priest also wear the cincture but tie it differently.

✚ **Pectoral cross or pendant:** Many acolytes wear a cross of wood or metal or a pendant particular to their parish while serving the altar as a reminder to themselves and others of their duties. The server's cross is usually three to four inches length and worn on a cord long enough so the cross hangs over the wearer's heart.

✚ **Chasuble:** A chasuble is a priest's vestment worn for Eucharistic services. Similar to a poncho, it hangs from the shoulders, has no specific sleeves, and may be oval or rectangular. Depending on style, it may have a collar or cowl. If there is more than one priest at a service, the primary celebrant wears the chasuble. Historical accounts disagree as to the origin and symbol behind both the chasuble and the stole but most include the fact that the chasuble designated the primary celebrant at the Eucharist and





provided extra warmth. The usual colors match the church seasons, for example, green, white, red, and so.

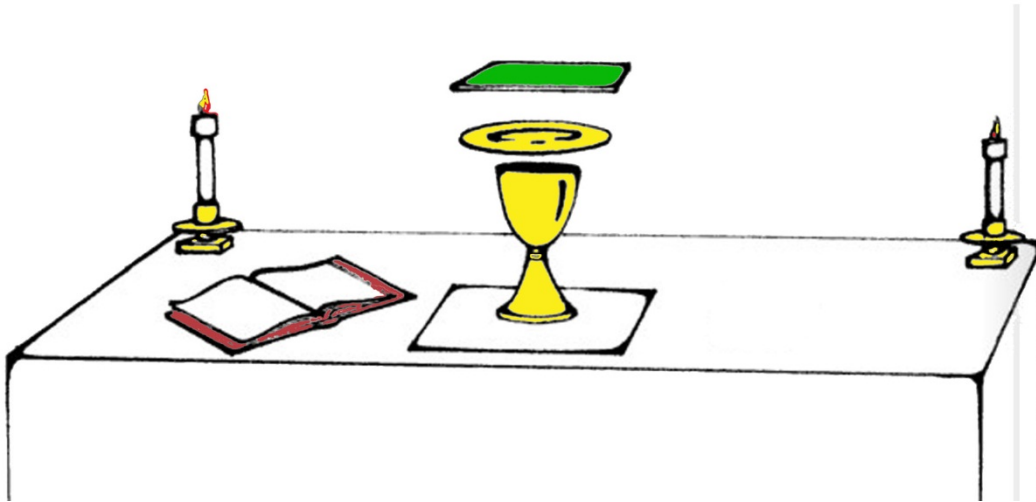
✚ **Stole:** This is a priest's vestment worn for sacramental services. The stole is a long, narrow cloth worn draped around the neck and hanging loose from both shoulders to about the knees. It may or may not be color-coded to match the colors of the altar hangings and the church seasons. Deacons also wear a stole when assisting with sacramental services, but deacons wear it across the chest and crossed or loosely knotted at the hip like a sash.

✚ **Cope:** Also a priest's vestment, but unlike the chasuble, a cope looks like a cape and closes in the front across the chest. Copes are often worn by bishops but may also be worn by priest, deacons, or laity on special or festive occasions. They are generally quite elaborate.

✚ **Dalmatic:** A dalmatic is a deacon's vestment generally worn over an alb for services. The color generally varies with the church seasons, as do the chasuble and altar hangings. However, the deacon's vestment is more tailored than a chasuble and has sleeves.



On The Altar



✚ **Chalice and paten:** The chalice is the cup used to hold the wine and water. The paten is the small plate used to hold the host bread during the Eucharist. You may hear the terms communion cup or common cup for the chalice, and bread plate or tray instead of paten. The chalice and paten are usually a matched set and may be stored together. In some parishes, the chalice and paten are kept on the credence table until they are needed in the service and returned there afterward.

✚ **Gospel book:** The book of gospel readings used during the service.

✚ **Candles:** Candles, in general, represent the light of Christ in the world. The two larger candles on either edge of the altar are the Eucharistic candles. The Pascal candle, a large, decorated candle, generally in separate stand, is used for



the fifty days of Easter and for Baptisms, funerals, and other special occasions. The Paschal candle specifically represents the light of the risen Christ and is lighted for the first time each year during the Easter Vigil.

✚ **Service book:** This is the prayer book used by the priest, which contains the service and rubrics [instructions for the priest] in print large enough to be read while conducting the celebration.

✚ **Basic altar hangings:** These usually include an altar cover in white linen or in the colors of the church seasons. If the cloth is in a color or fabric other than plain white linen, it may be called a “frontal”. Lectern and pulpit hangings usually match the colors and symbols on the frontal.

✚ **Altar linens:** The different linens can be confusing and for the most part of the priest and altar guild will deal with them. But occasionally a replacement or extra piece of linen may be needed, and acolytes should be able to identify the basics without a great deal of fuss.

The “fair linen” is the long white, rectangular linen cloth on top of the altar cover.

A “purificator” is a small 12 by 12-inch linen napkin used to wipe the chalice after Communion; it is folded in thirds and may have a small cross embroidered on its face.



The “corporal” is a larger napkin [about 20 by 20 inches] that the priest places on the fair linen under the chalice and paten while he prepares the Eucharist. It generally has a cross embroidered in the center or in one corner and is also folded in thirds.

The “pall” is a small [7 by 7 inches] stiff white linen-covered square placed over the chalice when it is not in use.

The “host box”, also called a breadbox, is generally a small silver, gold, or ceramic box with a lid, and contains the wafers to be consecrated during the Eucharist. In place of a host box, a ciborium, which is shaped like a chalice with a lid, may be used.

The two “cruets”, which can be made of glass, crystal, or ceramic, contain wine in one and water in the other. For large services, a large silver or ceramic flagon may be used to hold the wine.

The “lavabo bowl and a lavabo towel [rectangular, about 10 by 15 inches] are used for the ceremonial washing of the priest’s hands before the Eucharist. A second chalice covered by a purificator and pall may also be available if more than one chalice is needed for the service.



⚓ **ProceSSIONAL cross:** This is a cross or crucifix mounted on a staff for processions. The processional cross, carried by a crucifer, generally leads the procession as a reminder that we are called to follow the cross. The entrance of the cross begins the formal worship service.

⚓ **Sanctus bells:** A group of four small bells attached to a single handle. Some parishes use a gong and mallet for the same purpose. The bells are used in many parishes to signal the celebration and presence of Christ in our midst during the Eucharist at the acclamation and at the elevation of the bread and wine. Long ago, when the services were conducted in Latin rather than in the language of the local population, the bells signaled the congregation at important moments in the service.

The Offering

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the perfect offering made to God because it is Christ Himself who is priest and victim.

Around the world, hour by hour, as the Eucharist is offered, Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary and His Resurrection are made present, and His redeeming work continues for all. Christ told us, "Do this in memory of Me." The benefits of each Mass are infinite and include the whole world. The Blood of the new and everlasting covenant was "shed for you and for all." Those who have holy





Mass offered and those for whom a Mass is offered partake in a special way of the grace of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Spiritually, as you unite yourself with the priest who offers the Sacrifice of the Mass for your intentions, you share a bond of great strength: love of Christ in the Eucharist, trust in His love for you and faith in the power of prayer.

- When it is time to receive the offering go to the back of the church in order to lead the offerings.
- After arriving in front of the altar, bow and post on both sides to help the celebrant on receiving the offerings.
- You have to put the wine, the water and the bread host to consecrate on the altar.
- Be always alert if there are several offerings on the celebration.

🔔 **Sacristy bells:** Sacristy bells are either a single bell or a set of three bells usually attached to a cord and hung on the wall next to the door of the sacristy. The bells, usually rung by an acolyte, signal the entry of the clergy and the beginning of the service.

🔔 **Thurible and boat:** The thurible is a brass container designed to hold charcoal and incense. It usually has a chain attached to either the sides or a lid so that it may be safely



carried in procession. The boat, a small container with a spoon and lid, is used to carry extra incense to be used during the service. Some churches today use incense routinely for Eucharistic services. Some churches use it only for special occasions and others use incense rarely if at all.


✚ **The aumbry or tabernacle:** Either term may be used to refer to the cabinet or case used to store the reserved consecrated elements. Priest or lay ministers use the reserved elements when taking communion to those who are sick or unable to attend the service. Acolytes are not normally asked to open the aumbry.

✚ **Sanctuary lamp:** Close to the aumbry or tabernacle [sometime part of it] you may find a candle or oil lamp that burns at all times throughout the year. The light reminds us that Christ is present in the consecrated elements. The only time the sanctuary light is extinguished is after the Maundy Thursday service, when the altar is stripped for Good Friday. It is relit after the Easter Vigil.

✚ **Baptismal font:** The baptismal font is a stand with a basin for holding water during Baptism. The font can be made of marble in one piece and can be quite elaborate or as simple as a table and ceramic basin. Historically, baptismal fonts were placed in the back of the nave and close to the door as a reminder that it is through Baptism that we enter the Christian community. When entering the church, we are encouraged to dip a finger in the holy water and make the



sign of the cross on our own forehead as a reminder of the promises made at our Baptism and renewed at our Confirmation.

 **Station of the cross:** A series of plaques placed at intervals on the walls of the nave tell the story of Jesus' journey to the crucifixion and resurrection. These are used mostly during Lent for a short service in which participants walk from station to station to hear a piece of the story at each and share prayers.









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Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong

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